



LIFELINK

NEWSLETTER

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B4Stage4: Getting Proactive about your Mental Health and Well-being

While you may try to push through a cold or flu, you probably recognize that something isn't right after the first series of sneezes, aches or other symptoms. And when those symptoms persist, you're likely to seek resources to help you get well again. Even with chronic health conditions like cancer or heart disease, advancements in health technology, awareness and education have made seeking treatment a "no brainer." We now have tools for early detection and screening, making prevention more accessible than ever by helping to motivate adoption of healthier lifestyle habits. We're better able to recognize when something isn't right and are always encouraged to seek care early, not waiting years to get necessary treatment. We do what we can to address our health concerns before they reach the acute phase: stage 4.

Each May, we recognize Mental Health Month, or **Mental Health Awareness Month**, to foster understanding of the relationship between physical and psychological well-being and expand the dialogue surrounding mental health. This year's theme is "**B4Stage4**," emphasizing the importance of promoting good overall health as well as recognizing and treating mental health concerns early—just as we would with physical health concerns.

Mental health is influenced by a variety of factors—from emotional, psychological and social well-being, to our environments and physical health behaviors—impacting how we navigate stress and make choices. According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, research indicates that good mental health is associated with overall positive health outcomes. Despite these facts, many early signs of mental health concerns like mood changes or fluctuations in ability to function at work or home, go unrecognized. Even upon recognition, research indicates that an average of ten years passes before these symptoms are acknowledged and addressed—valuable time that

could otherwise be used to change or save a life.

Mental health conditions can impact anyone. According to the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration**, one in five American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year, and 50% of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition during their lifetime. That's why it's increasingly important to educate one another about **signs**, resources, and prevention, making sure that we're keeping health—both mental and physical—in the forefront of conversation.

Take this month as an opportunity to engage your shipmates and family members on the many resources available to promote mental health, intervene when symptoms are present and prevent "stage 4" crises. **Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE)** and **Mental Health America** have a myriad of tools to help educate and motivate action, and we'll be sharing additional tips throughout the month on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **WordPress**. Remember, health isn't merely the absence of a particular disease or disorder, and we must take conscious and active steps to maintain it. There is an unbreakable link between a healthy mind and overall wellness, adding truth to the old cliché "you only look as good as you feel."

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

B4Stage4

Changing the Way We Think About Mental Health

Mental Health Matters For Everyone



1 in 5

American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year¹

Click the image to view an infographic from Mental Health America and share with your shipmates.



LifeLink Spotlight

The following story shares the experience of a master chief who reached out for help during a stressful time in his life, recovered and was successfully reintegrated back into his duties.

While stationed aboard a submarine, just shy of a year into his first chief of the boat (COB) tour, Master Chief Doe's son began having a series of serious issues at school and home, and eventually ran away.*

Master Chief Doe tried to navigate this stress and work through the situation as best as he could by taking extended periods of leave when the boat was in port, but this only provided temporary resolution. Eventually his son ran away from home, was picked up by authorities, and threatened to take his own life. Having another son with a developmental disability, a wife who worked fulltime, and a stressful job with frequent deployments, taking a week of leave at a time was no longer sustainable—at home or at work.

Rather than continuing to deal with these stressors in silence, Master Chief Doe reached out to his chain of command and fellow COBs. Together, they developed a plan to place Doe on a Humanitarian Transfer (HUMS). Senior leadership may have wondered whether putting him on HUMS would set a precedence and have a ripple effect throughout the submarine community, but they decided that doing the right thing to help this Sailor get back on his feet trumped all. The Humanitarian Transfer allowed Master Chief Doe to make much needed progress with his family, giving him time to provide and seek support. Six months later, he was reintegrated back into the COB program.

Master Chief Doe stated that the support he received from his chain of command allowed him to address his issues and return to the Fleet as a more productive and ready leader. He and his family are grateful for the many resources offered by the Navy and are still in counseling to keep them strong, resilient and thriving.

Seeking help is a sign of strength—but it's not just an individual responsibility. The actions taken by Master Chief Doe and his leaders exemplify what it means to break the silence, remain connected, and support *Every Sailor, Every Day*.

*name redacted



Resilience Corner

2015 National Prevention Week

National Prevention Week is right around the corner (May 17-23)! This annual health observance, led by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**,

brings many opportunities to build community and motivate action around preventing substance abuse and mental health issues. It's

an excellent way for Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPC) to encourage engagement at the deckplate surrounding a myriad of detractors from overall health during **Mental Health Month**, with **daily themes** spanning from drug and alcohol abuse prevention to suicide prevention and mental health and wellness promotion. Here's how you can get involved:

- **"I Choose" Project:** Take a photo of yourself or with your shipmates, holding a sign with your reason for choosing to keep mental health and substance abuse prevention a priority. For more details and submission criteria, click [here](#).
- **Prevention Pledge:** Add a "brick" to the virtual **Prevention Pledge Wall** on SAMHSA's Facebook page and share your personal or community prevention story.
- **Engage with the #ChoosePrevention digital campaign:** Promote involvement by taking a photo showing how you maintain a healthy lifestyle and share via Facebook or Twitter using the hashtag #ChoosePrevention.

Visit www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week for more information and involvement ideas.



Facebook Brings Suicide Prevention to the Forefront

The world's most popular social network has announced that it will unveil new tools for its users to provide support and resources for those who may be at risk for suicide. Facebook has partnered with **Forefront**—an organization spearheaded by the University of Washington to advance innovative approaches to suicide prevention—to report posts that indicate suicide risk. Making this report activates a series of responses including guidance to help the person who spotted the concerning message safely remain in contact with the at-risk person and connect him or her to resources. Facebook will also review the reported post and launch additional support avenues for the person in distress. Read more about this effort here: <http://www.intheforefront.org/forefront-and-facebook-launch-suicide-prevention-tool>.

News and Resources

Tackling the First Steps to Get Help for Psychological Health Concerns [Real Warriors](#)

Support Mental Health Awareness Month: Get Your Resources Here [DCoE](#)

Keep What You've Earned, This and Every Month [All Hands Magazine](#)

Mind over Mood: Six Ways to Think Positively [Real Warriors](#)

Overeating and Stress [Navy Medicine Live](#)

Exercise Can Enhance Mental Health [Health.mil](#)

Psychological Health Research Leads to Readiness and Resilience [Navy Medicine Live](#)

The Battle with Eating Disorders [HPRC](#)

Technology Connects Service Members to Psychological Health Help [Armed with Science](#)

Former NBA Player Tells Military Families to 'Play Tough' When it Comes to Fitness and Nutrition [Health.mil](#)

Upcoming Events

SPC Training Webinars

May 13

May 27

[Register Here](#)

DCoE Webinar: Impact of Caregiver Stress

May 14

[Register Here](#)

National Prevention Week

May 17-23

Upcoming Professional Development Training for Chaplains

May 19-21 (Okinawa)

PTSD Awareness Month

June

Enhancing Pastoral Care Skills in Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention

Last month, more than 80 Navy chaplains and religious program specialists (RP) participated in a professional development training course (PDTTC) focused on enhancing their pastoral care skills in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. The training, conducted at Naval Station Norfolk, is one of 13 total PDTTC sessions the Chaplain Corps is conducting worldwide from January to July 2015.



The three-day training not only focused on pastoral care skills, but underscored the invaluable advisory role of chaplains to command triads to address command climate issues, help reduce barriers, and encourage help-seeking behavior to prevent suicide.

Subject matters experts in suicidology and suicide intervention from the **21st Century Sailor Office** and **LivingWorks Education** facilitated the training alongside the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center staff. Days one and two of the training focused on effective prevention and intervention strategies, including the importance of purposeful engagement at various transition points in a service member's career, and listening to connect the dots that may indicate risk. Risk factors that were emphasized included disrupted social networks, relationship challenges, occupational or academic setbacks, and fall from glory situations. Participants also learned how to use evidence-based intervention tools such as the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale and the VA Safety Plan. Both tools are intended to equip chaplains with the right questions to ask to help keep service members and family members safe, without compromising an individual's confidentiality.

"Chaplains are vital resources to Sailors and families, particularly when it comes to navigating life's stressors and challenges," said Steve Holton, deputy director for the 21st Century Sailor Office Suicide Prevention Branch. "The evidence-based tools we're introducing to the Fleet through these trainings will enable any shipmate, leader or professional to effectively assess a Sailor's level of risk, promote positive coping strategies, and build trust. This collaboration is another way for us to provide tools to support **Every Sailor, Every Day** and encourage proactive engagement before crises occur," Holton added.

The final day of training focused on reintegration and postvention. Participants learned how to best advise commanders in the aftermath of a suicide to be sensitive to the needs of the crew, and ways to foster an environment of healing. Each course also emphasized the importance of engaging family members, who are often the ones most attuned to changes in their service member. While many family members fear that disclosing information could impact their service members' career, they also have complete confidentiality with chaplains. In these cases, chaplains can act as an advocate to intervene and get the service member the help he or she needs.

"One of the best practices shared which I intend to take back to my command is the importance of rehearsing my command's suicide crisis response plan," said Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Prince, the command chaplain for the Coast Guard's 5th District. "My command recently had a person die by suicide. Since that time, I have been making unit visits to engage people on ways to be resilient by proactively setting physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual goals in their personal and professional relationships," Prince added. "This training was a great encouragement as it helped validate this approach to care for my people."

The next PDTTC for chaplains will take place from May 19-21 at Naval Base Okinawa. To learn more about chaplains and complete confidentiality, visit: www.chaplain.navy.mil and click on the confidentiality tab.